

Arrowhead Lodge Formed 70 Years Ago

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Fairbury has had two men's social clubs for many years. The oldest social group is Knoll Lodge, founded in 1919. This social group meets every Thursday night at their cabin on the Vermilion River, about five miles north of Fairbury. A meal is prepared for the group by a designated member.

The second-oldest social club is Arrowhead Lodge, founded in 1955. They also meet every Thursday night at their cabin in a beautiful wooded area about three miles northeast of Fairbury. The cabin is about a quarter-mile east of the South Fork of the Vermilion River. A meal is prepared for the group by a designated member.

According to the 1955 Constitution of Arrowhead Lodge, the social group initially had 25 members. The objective of the Arrowhead Lodge was "to maintain a country to be used for social and recreational purposes by and for members, and their guests." Arrowhead Lodge has always leased the land on which their cabin was located in Section 26 of Avoca Township from the John R. Goold (1919-2007) family.

Arrowhead was established with a President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and six members of the Board of Directors. The original Board of Directors was Carl J. Rapp – President, Robert Nussbaum – Vice President, Joe U. Slagel – Secretary/Treasurer, M. James Goold, Paul J. Hoffman, and Russell Mowery.

According to the original bylaws of Arrowhead Lodge, members had to be of good moral character and residents of Fairbury or its vicinity. If a vacancy occurred among the members, any current member could propose a candidate for membership, but the candidate had to be elected by a majority of the members. Balloting upon any new member, or upon any proposition where balloting becomes necessary, shall be by secret ballot. All members present must vote.

The original Constitution for Arrowhead Lodge specified that their annual meeting would be held on the first Thursday in August each year. The President had the authority to call any extraordinary meeting that he deemed necessary.

According to the May 21, 1963, edition of the Blade newspaper, Arrowhead Lodge experienced some excitement that year. On April 18, 1963, eight teenage boys broke into Arrowhead Lodge and the Indian Creek Golf Club in Fairbury. These teenagers stole four cases of beer from the Golf Club and one case of beer from Arrowhead Lodge. The Livingston County Sheriff's Department investigated these thefts and then charged the eight Fairbury-area teenagers with them.

Veterans Memorial Park is a small park located between the Post Office and the old City Hall. This park has a long history of volunteerism, and Arrowhead Lodge is part of this story.

In the 1880s and 1890s, this land was occupied by a very unsightly lumberyard owned by Mr. Von Tobel. It was also sunken by 36 inches, like Sunken Park is today. The first thing visitors arriving in Fairbury on the TP&W passenger train saw was this unsightly lumber yard.

Fairbury citizens were thrilled when Von Tobel sold his lumberyard to another lumberyard in Fairbury, and the purchaser dismantled and removed the unsightly buildings. Fairbury wanted to turn this land into a public park, but it was sunken. Citizens made a deal with the TP&W: the railroad would haul in excess dirt from another location, and volunteers would fill the park and level the land.

Citizens held fundraisers in 1902, and the money was used to create Central Park. The GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) Post 75 placed two cannons in the new park to honor Union Soldiers. The GAR was a Civil War veterans' group and the forerunner of today's American Legion.

In the 1960s, a round concrete fountain was in service in Central Park. Some ornery kids would often dump some soap into the fountain, and soap bubbles would be everywhere. In 1997, a new wooden gazebo was built atop the old fountain. Bluestem National Bank donated the gazebo. The two old cannons were removed from the park and placed in storage.

In 2005, members of Arrowhead Lodge volunteered to return the two old cannons to the park and place them east of the new gazebo.

Arrowhead Lodge President Randy Weber and lodge member Doug Steidinger met with the Fairbury City Council and received permission to return the two old cannons to the park. Central Park was eventually renamed Veterans Memorial Park, and a new stone was placed a few years ago with the park's new name.

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic started in the United States. Marsh Park picnic tables were loaned to local businesses that were forced to set up outdoor dining areas during the pandemic. In June of 2020, Mayor David Slagel coordinated a volunteer effort to replace the picnic tables at Marsh Park. This local effort included Slagel Manufacturing, Lehman Construction, the Fairbury Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Fairbury. Members of Arrowhead Lodge volunteered to assemble the new picnic tables.

The small group of men who envisioned a small cabin in the timber on the South Fork of the Vermilion River for social meetings back in 1955 probably never dreamed they were creating an organization that would last for more than 70 years and include many Fairbury-area men as members over that time.

Arrowhead Lodge maintains a website at ArrowheadLodge.Org. This website has more information about this organization.

Charter Members of Arrowhead Lodge

Victor Armstrong	Sam Koehl	Carl J. Rapp
Kenneth Brandt	Ernest Mies	Edward Rapp
Royce Carter	Russell Mowery	Joe U. Slagel
John R. Goold	Robert Nussbaum	Vernon Stephens
M. James Goold	Dave Parmale	Philip E. Tetley
Ross E. Hildreth	Walter Paternoster	Albert Tull
Paul J. Hoffman	Robert Perkins	Dale Wagner
Raymond K. Koehl	Andrew Rapp	Arthur Walter

Original list of charter members of Arrowhead Lodge taken from the 1955 Constitution for this group.